IMPORTANCE OF TREATING SEED GRAIN

A radio talk delivered by R. J. Haskell, Federal Extension Service, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Monday, February 18, 1935.

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Last summer's drought left in its wake thousands of unfilled granaries. Many farmers in the drought area did not grow enough grain to make seed for this year's crop.

Realizing the seriousness of seed scarcity the Federal government, has succeeded in saving some eighteen to twenty million bushels of grain for seed use in the Great Plains and neighboring States. Also private and commercial dealers have bought, and are distributing, large quantities of wheat, oats, barley, flax, and grain sorghum for use in these and other States. Never before has there been such a great concentration of seed grain in country and terminal elevators, and never before has the need for seed treatment been greater than it is this spring.

Let me explain why I think the need is greater. This emergency seed has come from widespread parts of the country. For instance, some of the oats came from the Pacific Northwest. Some of the durum wheat came from Canada. Many counties will receive seed that originated from a half dozen different sources. With these heavy movements there is the danger of the introduction and spread of new forms of smut, or possibly other cereal diseases.

The utmost care may be taken to purchase only the best grain for seed, but smuts of cereals are so common that it is practically impossible for anyone to secure large commercial lots of grain that do not have some smut--at least enough to give a smutty crop if certain weather conditions prevail. Therefore these lots of seed need disinfecting, to help prevent the introduction and the spread of plant diseases.

Furthermore, cereal seed in general needs disinfecting to help insure good crops. Farmers want to grow as much per acre as possible, and they want to grow the best quality grain possible--grain that will not be discounted for smut or blight when sold. From 2 to 4 cents per acre, invested in seed treating chemicals is one of the best forms of crop insurance, and will pay for itself many, many times.

Lastly, this emergency grain will be foundation seed for many farmers. That purchased by the government has been selected with special reference to quality and purity. If farmers like it they may be using the same strain 10 years from now. Therefore, they will want to start with it as nearly free from disease as possible. They will want to disinfect it thoroughly and by so doing save themselves trouble in years to come.

There are several chemicals that can be used for treating seed. Copper carbonate dust can be applied to spring and winter wheat. Some one of the several methods of applying formaldehyde may be employed for spring wheat, oats,

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and barley. Or the New Improved Ceresan, a dust, can be used on all three grains.

For applying dusts to seed grain, equipment has been devised ranging all the way from cheap, homemade mixers to large capacity, commercial treaters. Large-scale seed treatment by local elevators, seed houses, central treating plants, or portable treating outfits is practical and valuable. By means of it, farmers can be relieved of the inconvenience of treating at home, and a more uniform and satisfactory job of treating can be done, at a very low cost per bushel. Many such treating stations are now being set up. Farmers, business men and elevator interests are urged to consider their establishment and use. A new Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 219, entitled "Treat Seed Grain", gives details about methods of treating and may be obtained by writing the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

But, whether you farmers have your seed treated for you or whether you prefer to treat it on the farm, the message I want to leave with you is--Treat your seed grain this year. It will help to prevent the spread of plant diseases; it will tend to insure good yields and quality grain and it will make it easier for you to grow good crops in future years.

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